

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Fall Fire Safety

Summer has come to an end and the temperatures are dropping. It's that time of the year to think about raking the endless supply of fallen leaves and getting ready for cooler temperatures. Union County Fire Department would like to remind everyone of a few fire safety tips for this fall season. Three things to consider when it comes to fall are heating your home, maintaining the chimney, and the outside burning of debris.

The heating systems of your home, regardless of the type, need maintenance and attention before we get them started up. If you have a central heating system, it should be cleaned, inspected and serviced by a certified HVAC contractor every year before using it. If you have a gas heater, make sure that you have a functioning carbon monoxide detector installed in your home. It also probably a good idea to change your air filters.

For people who have a fireplace or a wood burning heater, there are several things to keep in mind. First, the chimney should be inspected and maintained. Have your chimney inspected each year by a certified inspector. They may also be able to clean and repair any damage found to the chimney. Fireplaces can be dangerous if not properly maintained. They should be cleaned and inspected before starting the first fire. Gas fireplaces are no exception. If a gas fireplace is not burning correctly, contact your gas company to have it inspected. Once again, do not forget the carbon monoxide detectors.

Outside burning of those piles of leaves and debris can be dangerous, especially during these high drought conditions. When burning debris, you first must obtain a burning permit from the Georgia Forestry Commission. The burning permit is easy to obtain by calling 1-877-OK2-Burn or by going on line at GaTrees.org.

Once you have a permit, it is time to prepare for safety and burn the debris pile. Check the weather to know conditions. Prepare tools that may be needed to help control the fire such as shovels, rakes and a water hose. Wear the proper clothing. When preparing the debris pile, make small piles and clear 25 feet or more around the pile. Remain with the fire until all debris is burned. If small embers remain, extinguish them with the water hose before leaving.

See Chief, page 5A

Drug Abuse Warning Signs Everyone Should Know About

It's been six months since the world went into mourning over the death of Prince—and then went into even deeper shock when it was revealed that the “Purple One” was actually fighting demons in the form

of substance abuse. Prince's close friends and family were blindsided that his cause of death was a prescription drug overdose. Unfortunately, Prince's story is not an uncommon one. Many addicts are private about their drug habits and suffer through addictions without telling their loved ones.

The most significant and destructive characteristic of addictions is that they occur in isolation. Some addicts will appear on the outside to be highly successful. Lurking in the depths of their being, however, is the insidious effect of a substance abuse disorder. These “high-functioning addicts” may be in the higher income range, may have advanced degrees, be celebrated in their field and are engaged with their friends and family. Still, there are subtle signs and behavioral changes you can look out for if you ever feel concerned that a loved one is acting strange or could have a problem with substance abuse.

Shocking drug overdoses might make the headlines when a celebrity is involved, but addiction can affect anyone. Here are the big signs you can look for if you suspect someone you love may be struggling.

See Drugs, page 5A

Letters to the Editor...

Does God Care?

Dear Editor,
With the recent scare and banning of clown masks and costumes around and about, I can only hope the Halloween on the Square festivities can be cautious about this too.

But whatever happened to the good old days of using your own imagination, and the stuff from around your house to create and come up with costumes and all? That used to be the fun and enjoyment of watching all of the creativity come to the front door. We used to even have our camcorders set too to record it all, and watch then after Halloween was all over.

Now they have these on the square festivities which has even eliminated all of that fun too.

I admit it might be for a safe cause and reason but still, if you go to houses where you know and can trust the people there you shouldn't have any issues or problems.

Just seems like too many changes for so many things that have just taken all of the fun out of life. No wonder we all keep calling it the good of 'days'!

No one even comes here to our house any more at all because of the in town festivities.

We used to have so many that I would honestly have to start giving out candy that my daughter got from going around in the neighborhood and one year I even ran out of that and had to start giving out canned goods! I know those kids enjoyed their can of vienna weiners and pot-
ted meat too! LOL!

Now, only memories.
Thank you,
Delores Barnes

High School Facility

Dear Editor,
When will the high school students be ready to perform in their beautiful new facility? We have no children in the school system but would dearly love to be in the audience.

Would the Band and English Departments advertise: when, what, and time for their performances?
Cathy Fiser

Authenticity

Everyone lives out a philosophy or religion whether aware of it or not. It is axiomatic that if you follow a path, you think it is the right one. But just because it is right for you does not necessarily mean that it is “Christian.” Believers and non-believers alike can mistake sincerity or appearances for authentic faith.

In another time, another place, I know of a church that was attacked like a wolf in sheep's clothing. A humble but well-to-do businessman joined them, but didn't really seek attention. He was encouraging, supportive, and generous. He knew the language of the Christian faith. He let it be known that he was an investment manager. Little by little the details emerged about his portfolio returning 25% or more annually with no risk. Soon he was signing up new customers at church. It was a pyramid scheme. He was eventually arrested and convicted. Most of his victims lost everything they invested, some their life savings. He appeared sincere, but was not authentic.

The Bible addresses authenticity thoroughly. The Lord understands the human tendency to fake it, and most posers aren't as blatant as the criminal in my story. A Hebrew prophet spoke to people who were quite religious, but had forsaken the Lord. “I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings” (Hos. 6:6).

Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.” He knew people would claim his name without submitting to the Father's will. He told parables about seeds that sprout and appear healthy until challenged, and weeds growing amidst the wheat. Is this not about authenticity? He spoke about a small gate and a narrow way “and there are few who find it,” which can be alarming (Mat. 7, 13).

John's first epistle has multiple tests of authentic faith. Has his grace moved you to admit sin, abide in Him, and love one another in deed and truth? If you have exchanged your life for His, you practice righteousness, confess the Son, and know the Spirit of God. Once I led a dialogue on this, and a venerable old saint asked, “Are we to test each other?” “No. We examine ourselves.”

See Fowler, page 5A

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



Commissioner's Questions

Q. Someone said that you had raised the property tax mil rate by 40% this year all the way up to 8.053 mils. You previously told us that you had actually cut our property tax mil rate by 1/10 mil to 5.788 mils. Which is it?

A-1. It is exactly like I said it is. Compare your current tax bill with last year's. We cut your mil rate by 1/10th of a mil this year. During an election year you are likely to hear all kinds of numbers being thrown around, by people who may not know how a county is run or how the millage rate is calculated. There are several components used in calculating the mil rate but some people like to “make up” what they think the numbers mean by leaving off the sales tax rollback portion of your property tax bill.

A-2. Since 1982, Union County has had a 7% sales tax. 4 of those pennies go to the State of Georgia. The 5th penny goes to the school, ESPLOST which stands for Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax. The sixth penny goes to the county capital projects called SPLOST, Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, that we all are familiar with and vote on every few years. The last penny that many do not know about, is called LOST (Local Option Sales Tax) and by State Law, the revenue from this goes entirely to reduce your property taxes and has done so since 1982.

A-3. I call a special meeting each year to set the mil rate, based on the amount of money that is required to run the county, (the County Budget). This year the mil rate was lowered to 5.788 mils from 5.888 mils (The 4th lowest mil rate in the state of Georgia). Prior to my setting the mil rate, our county and almost every county in Georgia has their required mil rate reduced by the Local Option Sales Tax revenue which is called The Tax Rollback. For 2015, the Local Option Sales Tax resulted in a 2.265 mil reduction in the county's portion of the total mil rate, which was nearly a 40% property tax savings to you the taxpayer. So, Union County DOES NOT have a tax rate of 8.053 mils as some have stated, but in fact has a mil rate of 5.788 as I have said all along. Anyone familiar with this process would know that the calculation has not

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



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North Georgia Motorcycle Show

If you are a motorcycle enthusiast, there is an event happening this weekend that you will not want to miss! The North Georgia Motorcycle Show is being held on Saturday, October 22nd at North Georgia Technical College from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Awards will be given in 9 classes:

Modern American, Vintage American, Modern European, Vintage European, Modern Japanese, Vintage Japanese, Competition, Custom, and Special Interest. For a motorcycle to qualify in the vintage categories, it must be 25 years or older.

There are no admission fees or show fees so come out and enjoy a fun day of fellowship, entertainment, door prizes and great food. If you need additional information about the event log

See Allison, page 5A

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Regina Allison



“Oh, I've learned a lot studying this Presidential race, but my folks won't let me use that kind of language.”

Emergency Exercise in North Georgia

October and November are the Fall wildfire months up here in North Georgia because of leaf fall, the normal dry conditions, low humidity, and when combined this leads to conditions where the risk for wildfire greatly increases for the residents living on these mountains.

Adding to this dangerous combination is the fact that about half of our residents up here are part-timers and go back to Florida or warmer climates during this time so there is no one at home to blow the leaves away from the house or remove limbs that add fuel to the fire when one starts. These are the months when most wildfires occur up here in the mountains. Our wildfire education is not just a seasonal thing, but is a never ending, year-round process that our FAC team works on at every opportunity which is anytime anyone will listen to what we have to say.

Many of the residents in these mountain communities are new to living in the woods and are not aware of the risks that are all around them every day so we, along with our partners take any opportunity to tell our story about fire prevention and preparation. Be Aware: We are in the situation that we have been warning you about for several years with the extreme drought we are experiencing now coupled with the fall conditions, we are all sitting in a tinder box waiting for a spark to start a wildfire that can consume all in its path. Google Fox Mountain wildfire in Dade County to see a fire that has been burning for several days. Even people living in the valleys are not safe because ember showers can throw flaming embers up to a mile ahead of the fire front, creating fire from the sky! Be careful and be Firewise around your homes and businesses because you have a better chance to survive a wildfire if you are prepared.

The best way we have found to get our message across to people is to demonstrate the resources and skills that the local emergency management departments & related partners have at their disposal to protect lives and property. On September 10 of this year we demonstrated the resources that White County has at its disposal by holding our second (first was in Towns County in 2015) live Ready Set Go exercise in Sky Lake, a gated community near Sautee. Sky Lake is one of Georgia's Firewise communities and is situated on very steep ground with narrow roads (like a maze) with one main entrance like many other communities in north Georgia. Planning this exercise took 8 months and many meetings with all of the emergency response agencies for White County and citizens involved in the exercise. That is a lot of time to invest for a 2-hour exercise, but without careful, detailed planning

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Frank Riley

Executive Director of RC&D



Great Memories

My grandfather passed on just shy of his 98th birthday. However, late in life he had great difficulty with short term memory. Sometimes, my dad and I took Papa to the woods where he always felt at ease. After seeing the blooming native azaleas (he called them honeysuckle) Papa began to relax and he laughed out loud and began telling us about some of his favorite memories. After listening to Papa I realized just how short life is and I thought about many of my own great memories.

Many of my fondest memories are centered on my family. For example, when I was a little boy we moved up north to the windy city of Chicago. I was desperately homesick and right before Christmas Uncle Bud sent me a brand new pair of cowboy boots. I don't know why, but, those boots are etched in my memory. They were one of the first Christmas presents I can remember receiving. I also remember finding orange slices, candy canes, and Brazil nuts under a Red Cedar Christmas Tree. To this day I can't resist buying those candied orange slices. I guess that is why I enjoy going to Foodland in Blairsville. Wayne Abercrombie is good about keeping me supplied with those orange slices.

Another memory from Christmas involves a chemistry set I received during my 5th grade year in school. Right after breakfast on Christmas morning I went to the basement and began the experimentation process. The first thing I concocted was “wake-up gas” which was nothing more than smelling salts or ammonia. I went upstairs to show my dad and found him asleep on the sofa. My young scientific mind deduced my sleeping dad would be a good subject to determine the effectiveness of my “Wake-up gas”. I placed the vile of “Wake-up gas” under my sleeping father's nose. My assumption was the “Wake-up gas” would wake my father from his sound sleep. The stuff worked better than I had anticipated. The “Wake-up gas” invigorated Dad. I can remember being chased by my barefooted, half-dressed daddy down a road for a half mile.

Another great memory involves my papa and granny. Papa and I were out squirrel hunting in late November. We were walking around the top of a bluff when Papa said, “Come over here, I want to show you something”. Papa was standing next to a massive Beech Tree. As I walked closer he pointed to the following initials, “CBC + GMC” (Columbus Bueron Cummings + Glenna Mae Cummings). Papa had carved these initials into the tree sometime in the late 1930s. I found my dad's and uncle's initials carved into another Beech Tree about 25 feet from the first tree. So, I carved my initials into the same tree and when my sons were born I carved their initials into the same tree.

See Cummings, page 5A

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Spring Bulb Planting

The end of the growing season may be drawing near, but the time for planting spring flowering bulbs is just beginning. Flowers such as daffodils, hyacinth, tulips, and other plants that bloom before tree canopies start to fully form should be planted from October to early December. Though the bulbs themselves may not look like much, if they are planted in a well-prepared site and maintained properly, they will produce a multitude of large, beautiful flowers as the temperatures begin to warm.

One of the most important aspects to planting bulbs is the site selection and preparation. Full sun is often best, but flowers will still form with light shade. If there is less than eight hours of sunlight at the site, you run the risk of decreased flower. The site must also be well drained. You can tell if your soil is well drained by digging a hole that is one foot deep, filling it with water and letting the water absorb. The next day, fill it with water again, and if the water disperses after eight to twelve hours, the soil has adequate drainage. If not, you may want to consider adding amendments to the soil to promote drainage. Appropriate amendments include compost, perlite, peat moss and other alternatives. Certain bulbs may do better with certain amendments, so always carefully check the care guide for the bulbs you are planting. Spring bulbs are most productive in a soil pH of 6.0 to 6.8, so always remember to test your soil before establishing these plants. Typically, one to two pounds of 10-10-10 fertilizer per square foot is an acceptable fertilizer rate.

When purchasing your bulbs, always check for mold, blemishes or cuts. If any of these are present, the bulbs are much more likely to rot or be susceptible to disease after they are planted. Planting bulbs at appropriate depths can also prevent disease and damage. For large bulbs (greater than two inches), plant them to a depth two to three times their diameter. For smaller bulbs, they should be planted three to four times their diameter deep. Different bulbs require different spacing, but planting a few smaller bulbs together in a large hole a few inches apart usually gives a better landscape effect than planting all bulbs individually. When placing the bulb in its hole, always be sure to plant it upright, with the fibrous roots down.

For spring flowering bulbs, not much continued maintenance is needed until they become crowded. Mulching keeps weeds down and helps protect them in hard winter weather, and normal spring rainfall is usually adequate water. However, every few years, you will probably need to divide your bulbs as they produce more roots and bulblets (small bulbs). Always wait until the bulb's foliage starts to yellow and wilt natural-

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From the Ground Up

Melissa Mattee



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